

MAINE ALEWIFE PUBLIC HEARING – GOVERNMENT OF CANADA COMMENTS MARCH 25, 2013

- I appreciate the opportunity to be permitted to participate in this public hearing on behalf of the Government of Canada.
- We are pleased that the Maine Department of Marine Resources, Representative Soctomah and Representative MacDonald have submitted draft bills intended to allow the passage of alewives – or river herring – along portions of the St. Croix River.
- Canada has long held the view that alewives should have open passage up the St. Croix River and its tributaries.
- As a native species, the alewife has an ecologically important role to play as a source of food and nutrients in this ecosystem; broad consensus among both U.S. and Canadian researchers has confirmed this. The alewife also serves an important economic purpose as a source of bait for the lobster industry and as forage for commercially viable groundfish stocks.
- The scientific community has concluded that the presence of alewives poses no threat to the basin's smallmouth bass population. History has also shown that the two species once co-existed in the same lakes and rivers.
- The Government of Canada encourages the State of Maine to adopt legislation that would restore the native alewife population to the St. Croix River in a timely manner.
- With regard to timing, we would like to see the re-introduction of alewives throughout their range as fast as possible.
- We would also urge swift implementation of any such legislation, including through the use of emergency provisions, to allow for passage to take effect immediately, in time for this year's spawning season.
- The Government of Canada would urge that any actions taken be based on the best available science. Ultimately, the restoration of the St. Croix river basin ecosystem to its natural state will be to the benefit both countries.
- The Government of Canada looks forward to working with the State of Maine and other interested parties to advance this important issue.

